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A WANDERER'S RETURN

THREE DUXBURY CHAPTERS

By HELEN S. EATON

The first Duxbury chapter began in my childhood when our summers were spent here at my grandmother's house on the corner of Surplus and Washington streets (where the Arnolds now live). The only traffic in those days was a big yellow barge with steps that let down at the back which used to meet the trains at the South Duxbury Station and bring us to Grandma's. When we reached Greenbush in the train we fancied we could begin to smell the ocean air and our excitement knew no bounds. I remember one other vehicle: an open carriage with a horse which my father hired on occasions for an outing inland. We children were not keen for this, for to us any time not spend in or on the water was wasted.

Next door (where the Princes now lives) was Winsor and Peterson's store. Most of our allowance of five cents a day apiece was spent here on candy. We used to make sure before going in that old Mr. Winsor was tending shop for available for the amount of gumdrops, etc., a nickel always seemed large when he took care of us.

Up Washington St. a few doors lived Capt. Beadle, a portly old man always clad in white ducks which, it was said, he washed himself. This time put him down as an eccentric with us children. He frequently called on our grandmother and once a year invited us children to his home to see a chambered nautilus and to listen to the surge of the sea in its shells. We were

told he didn't like children and were admonished to be on our best behavior.

Opposite us was Capt. Cushing who sat all day in a tilted chair in the sun. I seem to remember him in some sort of uniform on occasions—Civil War? He had a sign out announcing himself as Justice of the Peace. What an important title that seemed to me!

There was a handy man, called Gus, who would deal with no one but our grandmother. He always insisted on seeing "that purty coman" and she gave him coffee and doughnuts while discussing the work to be done.

Some Landmarks

An impressive sight to me were the trees at the Fanny Davenport place (where Mrs. Metcalf now lives). I suppose they were not as tall as nowadays but they appeared enormous in my child's eyes.

Nearby was Mrs. Bannister's boarding-house which used to harbor some of the spill-over from Grandma's house always fairly lurking at the seams with various uncles, aunts, and cousins.

Our sailboat was moored off the beach at the foot of Water St. where we went swimming. A triumphant feat for us children was to swim from here to the Yacht Club float which we were not allowed to do unaccompanied by my father.

Grandma was lenient on the whole, but she had one unbreakable rule: we were not allowed to come to the dining table in our bathing suits. We felt it a hardship to put on clothes during the day and often used to get the cook, a buxom, motherly Irish woman, to dish out things in the

kitchen that we could take to eat out in the boat.

When we sailed out on picnics our first port of call was Standish Shore to pick up ginger ale from the bottling place at the old Standish spring near the hotel. Here we were joined by our friends: the Carter girls—Elinor, now Mrs. J. Anderson Lord, Jessie, now Mrs. Henry Tolman, Madeline, and Leslie, now Mrs. Charles Harvey—and their mother, my aunt's great friend "Isabel." Then off for Saquish or The Gurnet, and a swim in the surf before lunch, or Clark's Is and sometimes stopping at Bug Light and climbing up the outside ladder. We thought nothing of sailing over to Plymouth for an ice cream soda. On such excursions when there was a good breeze our greatest delight was being dropped overboard and towed at the end of a rope.

These blissful, happy summers came to an end when we moved abroad to live.

Chapter Two

The second Duxbury chapter came many years later. In the intervening years we lived first in Germany, from where I went to school in Switzerland and to University (Sorbonne) in Paris, and finally in England which became and still remains "home" to me. Here my sister and I were groomed for presentation at Court which had to be postponed the first year because of her illness and again the next year since the first World War had come upon us and the Royal Family held no "drawing-rooms" for duration. In the interval I prepared for a theatrical career at Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (called RADA by us students). But, when war came, it seemed to call for the service of all able-bodied youth and, after six weeks training in the French Hospital in London, I was sent out as nurse's aide to a front-line hospital in France.

And Then

After the end of this war, I finally came back to this country where I had a research job in New York going home to England for a few months each summer. One summer we thought it would be fun for the whole family—with the new additions—to come again to Duxbury. My aunt, left alone, had sold the old home to Mr. Alison so we went to the Fanny Davenport

place, then being run as an inn. We occupied most of the house—my parents, an aunt, my sister with her English husband, two little boys, nurse and personal maid, and myself, with my brother and his wife weekends and various cousins at odd times. This time we had no sailboat, but times had changed and we had to make do with a station wagon to take us across the bridge for picnics and swims in the surf. (Incidentally the station wagon went back to England with the family and was the pride and joy of the family chauffeur's heart and the envy of the neighbors' chauffeurs, being used for luggage transportation from the station and for guns and other articles for the shooting season, etc.) Duxbury then had a movie, I think in the old Mattakeset Hall. And Peterson's drug store became a most popular spot with my brother-in-law who conceived a passion for ice-cream cones. He would disappear suddenly in the middle of a bridge game and reappear in a few minutes laden with a dozen or so cones.

The second World War interrupted our annual return to England and the third Duxbury chapter opened. My mother and I were alone by then and we spent several summers in the Jennie Alden house, the Bartlett house, the Simmons' house and at the Elliotts' boarding-house. And now, the last of the family left, I have my own little home here in Duxbury. In looking back to my first chapter I am conscious of the many changes. But I feel Duxbury has retained its old charm and take great pleasure in showing it off to outsiders. I still have my lifelong friends: the "Carter girls." And I have "gone native" to the extent of being glad of the extra elbow room at Hall's Corner after the exit of the "summer people!"